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# Chase and Lincoln in the Election of 1864

Ellis H. Ewing

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## CHASE AND LINCOLN IN THE ELECTION OF 1864

The election of 1864 is one of importance to students of American history because it was fought with many dangers to the Union. It might have been otherwise and had it been so the nation most certainly would have seen troublous times. Just now much truth is in the expression of Lincoln's that the enemy chose him so as not to "saw horses in the middle of the stream" and perhaps he better understood it as well as a clearer understanding of the opposition he had in 1864. The fortunes of the Union never seemed darker than during the interval between the meeting of the Republican Convention at Baltimore, June 7, 1864 to the fall of Atlanta, September 1. General Sherman had only three days before the convention accepted the nomination for president by the Republicans. The Democratic Convention was not to meet until the end of August. Republican dissatisfaction which was due to the slow progress of the war was at its height about the middle of August. This dissatisfaction was voiced by many fathers and fathers who had offered their sons to fight in the near-breaking campaigns of Spotsylvania, Gettysburg, and the Petersburg. But also many leaders of the nation, and even members of Lincoln's "political family" were beginning to be discouraged and openly critical of the administration.

ELLIS HUGH EWING

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requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Department of History

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## PREFACE

The election of 1864 is one of importance to students of American history because it was fraught with many dangers to the Union. It might have been otherwise and had it been so the nation most certainly would have seen troublous times. Just how much truth is in the expression of Lincoln's that the country chose him so as not to "swap horses in the middle of the stream" can perhaps be better understood if we have a clearer understanding of the opposition he had in 1864. The fortunes of the Union never seemed darker than during the interval between the meeting of the Republican Convention at Baltimore, June 7, 1864 to the fall of Atlanta, September 1. General Fremont had only three days before the convention accepted the nomination for president by the Republicans. The Democratic Convention was not to meet until the end of August. Republican dissatisfaction which was due to the slow progress of the war was at its height about the middle of August. This dissatisfaction was not only felt by the mothers and fathers who had offered their sons on the field of battle in the heartbreaking campaigns of Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, and the Petersburg, but also many leaders of the nation, and even members of Lincoln's "political family" were beginning to be discouraged and openly critical of the administration.

Mr. Chase has since that time been the butt of much criticism because he was so openly critical of the president and worked against him in the early part of the campaign. That he did connive with his friends and political associates cannot be denied. This stands as perhaps the greatest black mark of Chase's career. It is not my purpose in this thesis to defend Chase for his action, as most historians are inclined to do. Chase believed himself guilty of no moral wrong and if he were doing Lincoln an injustice he was doing the country a greater good by placing a man of greater intelligence and superior judgment--that is, Chase himself,--at the helm. That Chase failed to see that he could not win and that he built up hopes which were fostered by well-meaning but misguided friends only emphasizes the weaknesses of Chase's character and judgment. This I expect to prove by citing a number of letters which were written by Chase and his associates.

It would have been impossible for Chase to gain the nomination under any circumstances because of the popular appeal of Mr. Lincoln. Under the changing conditions that followed the capture of Atlanta, and the nomination of McClellan and Pendleton on a platform declaring the war a failure, all Republican opposition to Lincoln ceased. By this time Mr. Chase had proved himself so thoroughly incompatible with the administration that his resignation was inevitable.



For the material of this thesis I am indebted to the biographers of Chase, A. B. Hart, R. B. Warden, J. W. Schuckers, and J. C. Trowbridge, besides many other references. For his advice and helpful criticisms on the compilation of this material I am indebted to Mr. A. D. Beeler.

# FRANK AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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### FRANK AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The following table shows the contents of the book, and the pages on which they are found. The book is divided into five parts, and each part is further divided into chapters. The book is written in a simple and straightforward style, and is intended for the general reader.

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This book is a history of the life and times of Abraham Lincoln, and is intended for the general reader. It is written in a simple and straightforward style, and is intended to be a history of the life and times of Abraham Lincoln.

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## CHASE AND LINCOLN IN THE ELECTION OF 1864

### CHAPTER I

#### EARLY LIFE AND POLITICAL CAREER OF CHASE

Salmon Portland Chase was born in Cornish, New Hampshire, on January 13, 1808, the eighth child of a family of eleven. The Chase family was of purest American stock with an equal heritage of English Puritanism, from his father's side; and Scotch Covenanterism from his mother's side.<sup>1</sup> Few families could boast such a proportion of energetic leaders. One uncle, Dudley, was twice a United States Senator. To this uncle young Salmon had once in discouragement applied for assistance in getting a clerkship and received a warning never to enter the government service and an offer of fifty cents to buy a spade.<sup>2</sup> Another uncle, who was not so unkindly disposed, was Bishop Chase of Worthington, near Columbus. This uncle gave him much assistance in his education and started him out in his professional career.

Throughout Chase's entire life he was beset by incidents of overwhelming grief caused by the death of his loved

1. N. S. Townsend, Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, Vol. I, February 24, 1887, p. 111-126.

2. A. B. Hart, Life of Chase, p. 6. American Statesmen Series edited by John Morse, Jr.

ones. When but nine years of age the poor lad lost his father and for the remainder of his boyhood days the family was placed above want only by economy and steady industry.

When the lad was twelve years of age his uncle, Philander Bishop Chase, took the boy to Worthington where he simultaneously did farm work and studied Greek.<sup>1</sup> In 1832 his uncle became president of Cincinnati College where the boy enrolled as a freshman. Evidently the requirements were not exacting for the boy quickly became a sophomore, as yet only fifteen. The bishop retained this position for only a year, at the close of which time young Chase returned to his New Hampshire home.

Being away from home much of his life young Chase felt less of a mother's influence than most boys, yet there was no question but that he had great respect for his mother. Perhaps his life would have been softened and enriched if he had had more contact with the affections of a mother. In 1824 his mother with great sacrifice, put Salmon into Dartmouth College, where he entered as a junior. To help pay for his expenses he taught in country schools during the long winter months. In 1826 he graduated from Dartmouth.

On graduating he had already made up his mind to take up the study of law. Uncle Philander, his good angel, appeared at the right moment with letters of introduction to

1. A. B. Hart, Life of Chase, p. 4.

his friends in Washington. Here he was fortunate in being able to study under the Honorable William Wirt, Attorney General of the United States of America.<sup>1</sup> To young Chase, Mr. Wirt was the finest gentleman of his acquaintance.

As a student of law, Chase never excelled in scholarship. He himself admits that seldom has a candidate presented himself with so slender a stock of learning for admission to the bar.<sup>2</sup> His admission to the bar closed the first period of his life. At twenty-two years of age he was handsome, though still an awkward youth, maintaining a great deal of confidence in his own ability, yet aware of his own deficiencies.

With little money and large expectations Chase went west in 1830. His choice for practicing his profession was Cincinnati, which was the largest city west of the Appalachian mountains.

Chase's first two years practice were very meager and in order to supplement his work as a lawyer he made a very scholarly collection of all the laws of Ohio from 1787 to 1832, with a brief historical sketch of Ohio as a prelude to the main work. This erudition of the young lawyer received the commendation of no less personalities than Justice Story and Chancellor Kent.<sup>3</sup> Soon after the publication of the Ohio

1. A. B. Hart, Life of Chase, p. 4.

2. *ibid*, p. 11.

3. *ibid*, p. 19.

Statutes, Chase married Catherine Jane Garniss, a young lady just three years his junior. Chase was fond of the ladies and he was very much in love with his wife. In his marital adventures the poor man was very unfortunate. In 1835 his first wife died, leaving a little girl that lived only four years longer. The desolation of the young father and the anguish of the months that followed intensified the deep religious feeling to which he gave frequent mention in his writings and public utterances. Four years later Chase married Elize Anne Smith, age eighteen. To this union three children were born, only one of which lived. Even this wife was taken from him after six years of married life. She had been a refined woman and influenced him greatly.

A third marriage took place November 6, 1846 with Sarah Dunlop Ludlow. This woman lent a great deal of dignity and grace to his home. She was a woman of some property and good standing in Cincinnati society. To this wife two children were born of which only one lived. Again in 1852 Chase was bereft of his third wife. In a short period of seventeen years the poor man had stood at the biers of three wives and five children, sorrow enough to depress the most buoyant spirit.

In spite of his sorrows Chase's professional reputation steadily increased. As a lawyer, opinions of his ability vary. There are stories of how he broke down on his first important arguments. He never became a great jury lawyer like Lincoln. As one friend put it, "Chase was not a great



lawyer but a great man who had a knowledge of the law."<sup>1</sup> We find that through these years Chase formed several partnerships. In 1834 Chase and Eels were law partners. In 1838 they parted company and Chase took up Flamen Ball, who had studied in his office. In 1847 an additional partner was added, Horace Wills, and again in 1849 George Hoadly.

Chase's legal practice was chiefly commercial. An important part of his business was his connection with the bank of the United States of America. This lucrative business, however, was lost to him in 1841 because his fees were too high. In twenty years practice Chase had accumulated a net property of about \$20,000. Had he continued in corporation law, in which he was well fitted, he might have become a rich man but he gradually took up interests which kept him a comfortable poor man.

His first political manoeuver was his participation with the Liberty Party movement. From 1840 to 1849 Chase led a kind of triple life. He had his private and professional interests, he had his anti-slavery pursuits, and the great political task of organizing the Free Soil Party.<sup>2</sup> Chase could not be considered at this time as an abolitionist, yet he was a prominent speaker at abolitionists meetings and during this period was in correspondence with the Western

1. A. B. Hart, Life of Chase, p. 23.

2. *ibid*, p. 84.



Abolitionists. He was prominent in his efforts to give the negro his legal rights and defend the friends of the slave. Just how Chase became an anti-slavery man it is not certain. This we do know that once a moral conviction was established in his mind, it could never be removed and he gave the best twenty-four years of his life from 1837 to 1861 to the eradication of slavery. In this movement we must not associate him with disunion sentiments of Garrison and Lundy, who in 1859 called him a political huckster. Chase had more the type of character of John Q. Adams and was one of the great constitutional defenders of the black man and of the freedom of speech and the press.

In 1827 a colored citizen in New York was seized, imprisoned as a runaway slave. Chase, who was aware of the incident, prepared a petition to Congress praying the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia for a number of Cincinnati citizens. In this capacity we find him merely acting as a legal agent rather than from his own convictions. In 1833 he took the celebrated Matilda Case. James G. Birney had been accused of harboring the runaway slave girl, Matilda. Matilda had been brought to Cincinnati by her master who chose to take her back with him to Kentucky.<sup>1</sup> Here we find features of the case which were similar to the celebrated Dred Scott case of 1859. Matilda had been brought voluntarily by her

1. A. B. Hart, Life of Chase, p. 73.

master to a free state and legal defense of her case stated that she became automatically free. The court not choosing to commit itself on this point threw the case out of court on a technicality and the charges against Birney were dismissed.

Chase's political activities during this period were subordinated to the interests of the slavery cause. Up to 1840 he had little to do with politics although a delegate to the National Republican Convention which nominated Clay in 1832. By 1840 he was still a Whig. In 1841 came Chase's first political crisis. In May of that year he joined Birney's Liberty Party. The Liberty Party at this time was a small and feeble party. Although Chase joined the Liberty Party he still supported Harrison and was able to exert some influence over that individual.<sup>1</sup> Upon Harrison's death Chase withdrew from the Whig Party completely. As far as his natural sympathies at that time were concerned on national problems other than slavery, he was in accord with the Democratic Party. That party in Ohio had enacted a strict fugitive slave law and Chase's convictions forced him to form alliances elsewhere. He reluctantly threw in his lot with an unpopular set of men and engaged in what seemed to be a hopeless crusade. In this crusade he became a "big duck in a little puddle." Many situations which demanded statements of policy were thrust upon him and he became the natural leader of the dissenting groups.

1. A. B. Hart, Life of Chase, p. 98.

The Western and Southern Liberty Conventions held in Cincinnati in 1845 proved to be a rallying point for anti-slavery sentiment in the West. Chase was under no delusions as to the future of the Liberty Party or to any other third party movement. In 1847 he stated, "I see no prospect of greater future progress but rather of less." As fast as we can bring public sentiment to the right the other parties will approach our ground. To build up a new party is by no means so easy as to compel the old parties to do a particular work. If we can once get the Democratic Party in motion regarding the overthrow of slavery as a legitimate and necessary result of its principles, I would have no apprehension at all of the work."<sup>1</sup>

Chase declined the vice-presidential nomination with John P. Hale in the Liberty convention of October 1847 and did his part to cause the split of that party during the ensuing campaign. The conventions of 1848 were a disappointment to the Abolitionists. Neither of the two parties had an acceptable candidate. Taylor was a slave holder and Cass a dough-face. This gave opportunity for a great deal of dissension. The dissenting elements in turn came together in the National Free-Soil Convention. Chase was one of the chief instigators of this convention, in which the name "Liberty Party" disappeared and the term "Free Soil" taking even yet a

1. A. B. Hart, Life of Chase, p. 99.

narrower stand took its place. Perhaps there was no more stirring banner in the annals of political history than that of the Free Soil Party in 1848--free soil, free speech, free men. That same year the Free Soilers of the Ohio Legislature were able to use their balance of power to elect Chase as United States Senator. His activity in this Senatorial capacity was writing slavery restrictions into the National law and paving the way for a Democratic nominee, Medill. In this election the Germans of Southern Ohio were almost in a body behind him. This Republican victory in a state as important as Ohio was a great factor in strengthening the party for the presidential election of 1856.

Chase took the election of 1856 as a protest from the people against the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. As governor of Ohio he did all that he could to support the anti-slavery movement as long as it fell within the bounds of the law. On this point he was very firm and remained faithful to his duties as governor.

Chase was not cut out for a popular governor due to his peculiarities and lack of personal magnetism but this did not keep him from being an excellent governor. Chase's ideas on his qualifications for the presidency were clear cut. He believed that he had the qualities for a good president and he was strongly convinced of the correctness of Republican principles. Moreover, Chase succeeded in convincing himself that he had a large popular following.



During the first half of 1856 Chase and his few friends were at work but it did not take these friends long to discover the impossibility of Chase's election and the inevitability of Fremont's. Even with a solid Ohio delegation he could not have won and of Ohio's sixty-nine delegates Chase could count only on thirty-five while thirty-four were either for Fremont or Judge McLean. While he could count on about sixty delegates from other states at the Philadelphia convention his case was hopeless and Fremont received the nomination.

An unfortunate incident occurred during his governorship that had a bearing on his candidacy in 1860. In June, 1857 Gibson, the state treasurer of Ohio brazenly admitted that there was about \$500,000 missing from the state treasury. It seemed hard for Chase to admit that embezzlement was going on amongst his friends but he was forced to dismiss Gibson and present charges against him. The incident was a dangerous one for the party and when they took up the fight for the gubernatorial seat again in 1857 Chase could not refuse to accept the fight and the renomination. In this election he won, but by a close majority, his chief opposition being by now the Democrats as the Whigs and Know-Nothings had been completely broken up.

This re-election in 1857 showed greater Republican vitality in Ohio than in some other states in which the party generally lost ground. In the congressional elections

in 1858 the party secured for the first time a working majority in Congress and victory in 1860 became more and more a possibility as the years went by, its contest for the Republican nomination in 1860 began early and grew more spirited as the months passed.

## CHAPTER II

### ELECTION OF 1860

The election of 1860 was one of the epic elections of history rivaled only by the elections of 1824 and 1912. Chase had by this time developed an obsession for the presidency, his maneuvers are a case study as to the methods of becoming president. Chase, like Lincoln had developed the art of letter-writing and he cultivated a wide-spread correspondence. In 1857 we find him chiding a correspondent for speaking too well of Fremont.<sup>1</sup> In September of 1857 scattered correspondents began to announce their support of his candidacy. Already he had begun to revive the campaign life which he had projected in 1856. He began to cultivate newspaper friends. At one time we find him making a commencement speech at Dartmouth, and again pledging the support of the congressman from Ohio toward his nomination to the presidency. His influential friends out of state, Governor Robinson of Kansas and Joshua Hanna from Pennsylvania, a Pittsburg banker, worked for him in those states. Another friend, Pierce, a New England representative, gave gave some discouraging prospects from that section. New York was under

1. A. B. Hart, Life of Chase, p. 179.



the domination of Seward but an associate of his, Hiram Barney of New York City worked for him there. In 1858 Chase stumped the state for senator for the Republican Party.

In 1859 he ran again to renew his strength. In spite of these victories Chase had much opposition, particularly in the north-western counties. In certain sections of the United States, Chase was considered a dangerous candidate, yet perhaps on every national problem except slavery, he was a conservative. On the tariff question Chase was considered a free trader which was, of course, objectionable to the New England States.

Other candidates also had their weaknesses. Seward had two weaknesses, first his anti-slavery views as expressed by his "irrepressible conflict" and "higher law" speeches and second the opposition of Horace Greeley. Banks of Massachusetts was overborne by his adhesion to the remnants of Know-Nothingism. Cameron of Pennsylvania did not have the support of all the state. Francis P. Blair of that state had deserted Fremont and had turned to Bates who was supposed to be able to carry the border states along with the North. Lincoln at this time was considered more as a vice-presidential candidate than as a presidential threat. As vice-president he would defeat the nomination of another westerner, Bates, for the presidency. Bates had the opposition of practically all the remaining candidates.

Chase's greatest weakness lay in the fact that he did not have the support of the newspapers and great political leaders of his own state. His greatest strength in Ohio lay in almost united support of the German population of Southwestern Ohio. On the other hand, Lincoln had the united support of Illinois, while Seward had united backing of the state of New York. During the early months of 1860, Chase kept careful watch of the delegates.

The departure from the unit rule in Ohio caused the defeat of Chase. The republican State Convention of Ohio, called to elect senatorial delegates to the National Convention declared the preference of the Republicans to be for the nomination of Governor Chase; the vote standing at 385 for and 69 against. But the convention chose only four delegates at large, leaving the rest to be chosen by conventions in congressional districts. This permitted the delegation to be divided and friends of other candidates were given an opportunity to work for their candidate against Chase.<sup>1</sup> Old Judge McLean of Ohio was his worst enemy and worked continuously against him. In spite of the opposition, his spirits were buoyant and ten days before the convention he was optimistic about the campaign.

The convention, which met in Chicago, was attended by an unusual number of spectators. The contest narrowed down to six doubtful states, Illinois, Indiana, New York, New

1. Schuckers, Life of S. P. Chase, p. 197-198.

Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. In the balloting, Chase never received over forty-nine votes out of Ohio's sixty-five and had the mortification of losing because of his own delegation.<sup>1</sup>

After Mr. Lincoln's nomination on September 8, 1860, Lincoln and Chase were amicably disposed toward one another.

Chase immediately sent him a letter March 19, 1860 congratulating him and pointing out the fact that he had the united support of Illinois while his own delegation had betrayed him.<sup>2</sup> Lincoln, in a reply on May 26, thanked him for his kind letter and stated that he believed all candidates of the convention, with the possible exception of Bates and Carey, were behind him. Following the election, Chase sent this letter, "The objects of my wishes and labors for nineteen years have been accomplished by this election."<sup>3</sup> A month later, Lincoln on January 3, called Chase to Springfield for the conference.

At the Springfield Conference on January 3, Lincoln met Chase at his hotel and with some evident embarrassment stated, "I have done with you, what I would not perhaps have ventured to do with any other man in the country, sent for to ask whether you will accept the appointment of

1. Hart, Life of Chase, p. 192.

2. American Historical Review, 1902, Diary of Salmon P. Chase.

3. R. B. Warden, Life and Public Services of S. P. Chase, p. 364.

Secretary of the Treasury without being exactly prepared to offer it to you.<sup>1</sup> On explanation of this dilemma, he stated that since Mr. Seward had been recognized head of the party, he had offered the position of Secretary of State to him. If he refused, then it was his intention to devolve that position upon Mr. Chase. If not, then he would like Mr. Chase to assume the office of Secretary of the Treasury.

Was this offering Mr. Chase second choice? No doubt Mr. Chase thought so. To add to this, it was not until March 6, 1861, after months of suspense and indecision that Mr. Chase's name was sent to the Senate for approval.

1. Schuckers, Life of Chase, p. 201.

### CHAPTER III

#### LINCOLN'S FIRST TERM

Perhaps no other president in history, with the possible exception of Washington or Jefferson, had a cabinet composed of more capable men than Lincoln's. After the incompetent Cameron was replaced by Stanton there can be no doubt of the ability of the men. It is a great tribute to pay to Lincoln to say that he was able to pick the best minds and political leaders of his country, and by sheer force of intellect, dominate them and use them for the common good. Like Washington's cabinet, Lincoln's was destined to be one of great conflict. Almost from the beginning it was divided into two hostile camps.<sup>1</sup> Seward, Stanton, and Chase on the one hand; opposed many of the policies of the president and lined up with the radical faction of the Republican Party. Blair, Bates, and Welles on the other side, supported the president and were backed by the conservative group of the Republican Party.

Perhaps no cabinet composed of such great men ever stooped to play such petty politics. Lincoln, himself, spent many months in the selection of his cabinet. The

1. Wm. Ernest Smith, F. P. Blair Family in Politics, Vol. I, p. 517.



thought of getting as many of the leaders as possible into his political family, no doubt prevailed in the president's mind. We have already discussed the selection of Seward and Chase. These two men came into the cabinet with the notion that they could manage the president. Seward quickly found out that Lincoln was his own administrator and he gracefully receded from this position. Chase never did, and throughout his term looked upon the president as an inferior mind and lacking the dignity becoming to so high an office.<sup>1</sup>

In looking for other cabinet appointments Lincoln could not overlook the prominent position of the Blairs in the Republican Party. Very soon after the election the elder Blair interviewed Lincoln in regard to his sons and friends.<sup>2</sup> He was seventy years of age by this time, active and full of vigor, taking a keen interest in politics, shooting at targets and other sports. As a boy he had played at the knee of Andrew Jackson and grew up in the Jacksonian tradition. It was his custom to drive his own carriage to Washington accompanied by his wife, tie up the carriage at 1651 Pennsylvania Avenue, and walk down to the

1. Hart, Life of Chase, p. 291.

2. Wm. Ernest Smith, F. P. Blair Family in Politics, Vol. I, p. 515-516.

capitol or White House to advise members of the government.<sup>1</sup> Lincoln had been advised to treat the Blairs coolly but there was perhaps no other person in whom Lincoln held stricter confidence. The Senior Blair even helped Lincoln to write his inaugural address.

There is little wonder that Montgomery Blair was given a position. He could have held any position of the cabinet equally well, and being a West Pointer, he would have fitted in the War Office admirably.<sup>1</sup> As postmaster he conducted that office with vigor and farsightedness. His policies in connection with the extension of the mail service in the far west is a glowing example of his services.

Thurlow Weed had proposed Henry Winter Davis for the position, but Lincoln had preferred Montgomery Blair. The quarrel was bitter and caused Henry W. Davis to come into opposition with the president. Bates almost invariably sided with the Blairs and was very much worried when they did not agree with him. Welles also coincided with the Blair views. In 1860, Chase and the Blairs were good friends. Both were proud of the part they had played in the development of the Republican Party. The friendship between the Blairs and Chase ended when Chase began to encourage the radicals against the conservatives and work

1. Wm. Ernest Smith, F. P. Blair Family in Politics, Vol. II, p. 189.

2. *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 211.



for the presidency.<sup>1</sup> They could read Chase like an open book and his secret ambition, which was really the greatest weakness of an otherwise noble character, disgusted them. Open warfare began when Chase gained the support of the St. Louis Democrat, a radical paper, and appointed the enemies of Frank Blair to the treasury posts in Missouri.<sup>2</sup> General Frank Blair was opposed to the policy of trading food for cotton in the border states. In his opinion it prolonged the war by helping the South and destroyed the morale of the Union Army. He was very critical of the trade permits issued by the Treasury Department.

On June 3, 1863, Joseph William McClurg,<sup>3</sup> a member of Congress from Missouri, attacked General Blair for corruption in a whiskey transaction. He produced as evidence a forged order telling of a transaction involving between eight and ten thousand dollars in whiskey from which General Blair was supposed to have reaped a considerable profit. At the time of this accusation Blair was fighting at Vicksburg and could not defend himself. After the Vicksburg campaign he was moved to Chattanooga. It was not until April of 1864 that Blair took up the charges and proceeded to exonerate himself. In the mean-

1. Wm. E. Smith, F. P. Blair Family in Politics, Vol. II, p. 211

2. *ibid*, Vol. II, p. 234

3. *ibid*, Vol. II, p. 256, *Op. Cit.*, Globe, 38th Session, Pt. 2, June 3, 1863.

time, the rift between Montgomery Blair and Chase widened. Chase had made a tour of the West, making a series of excellent speeches at Cincinnati and Indianapolis in which he pointed out that the successes of Vicksburg and Gettysburg were due to the Emancipation Proclamation.<sup>1</sup> These speeches were considerably out of tune with the military authorities and a speech made by Montgomery Blair on October 3, 1863, known as the Rockville speech in which he had defended the president's policies of reconstruction and emancipation.<sup>2</sup>

There were two problems of political importance in the West during the early part of the Civil War, one was the importance of getting possession of the Mississippi and opening trade down the river, and the other was the Emancipation of the slaves. Oliver P. Morton, in a letter to Lincoln, October 27, 1862 made this statement, "The importance of river trade to commerce of the northwest is so potent as to impress itself with great force upon the most ignorant minds, and requires only to be stated to be at once understood and accepted, and I give here as my deliberate judgment that, should the misfortune of our arms or other causes, compel us to the abandonment of this war and the concession of the independence of rebel states,

1. Wm. E. Smith, P. P. Blair Family in Politics, Vol II, p. 243.

2. *ibid*, Vol. II, p. 241-242.

Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois can only be prevented from a new act of secession by a bloody and desolating Civil War."<sup>1</sup>

The political effect of the Emancipation Proclamation was also noteworthy. Since the first steps of emancipation taken prematurely by Fremont in Missouri and Hunter in South Carolina, the question had been foremost in western politics. The radicals of Missouri had defended Fremont and had been extremely critical of the president for his "milk and water" policies. So universal was the stand against Lincoln in 1862 that the whole West seemed to turn against him.

Foulke, in his life of Oliver P. Morton, makes this observation, "Wise as this measure was and successful in its ultimate consequence, its immediate political result was disastrous.. Party conflicts which had been smothered in the general enthusiasm were now revived with great bitterness. There was a violent protest that the administration had changed the war for the Union into a war for abolition of slavery."<sup>2</sup>

The elections of 1862 went against the Republicans in Indiana, and Morton, until after the November election of 1864, was forced to concentrate all his splendid energies on pushing war measures through a recalcitrant assembly. Chase, at this time, had the presidency on his mind, but

1. Wm. Dudley Foulke, Life of Oliver P. Morton, Vol. I, p. 209.

2. Wm. Dudley Foulke, Life of Oliver P. Morton, Vol. I, p. 207.

his chief efforts were in restoring the party and healing the dissensions that crept in.<sup>1</sup> It is said that when the Emancipation Proclamation was first proposed to the assembled cabinet, Chase was taken completely by surprise. He had proposed, prior to this time, his own ideas on emancipation and had lent a sympathetic ear to the dissatisfaction of the radicals upon what they called the president's vacillating and compromising stand. When it was proposed, Chase could do nothing but give his support. He even took part in writing the first part of the Proclamation.

In the spring of 1863, Secretary Chase did not actively take part in a presidential campaign, but he did permit the rumor to spread that he would accept any responsibility that the country might impose on him. His chief concern was to better the relations between himself and Senator Wade. In the election of 1860, Wade had been largely responsible for dividing the Ohio delegation and Chase found it hard to forgive him. When he saw that it was necessary to get Wade's support, he decided that it would be best to bury the hatchet and work together.

1. A. B. Hart, Life of Chase, p. 309.

2. *ibid*, p. 307.

In August of 1863, Chase's friends were openly suggesting his candidacy although he, himself, repeatedly expressed his preference for a judicial position in letters to his Ohio friends and Senator Sprague, who was soon to be his son-in-law. In October he took part in the State election in Ohio and made several speeches, which surprised his friends. Chase was never a great public orator and always had a great deal of fear and trepidation before an audience. At one time we find him making this statement that, "knowing my aversion to public speaking, and my distrust in my own ability in that line if a speech from me would be useful, I will try."<sup>1</sup>

As early as the spring of 1863, Greeley began looking for a successor to Lincoln and he did not immediately decide on Chase. His first choice was General Rosecrans. An elaborate plan was laid to force Lincoln to resign, put Hamlin in office and then compel Hamlin to give Rosecrans control of the entire army. To this plan, Rosecrans replied, "My place is here, the country gave me my education and so has a right to my military services." He also declared that in his humble estimation, Greeley was wrong about Lincoln and that time would reveal his error?<sup>2</sup>

1. New York Sun, June 30, 1889, Unwritten History published letter to T. Stevens, August 1864.
2. Tarbell, Life of Lincoln, Vol. III, p. 172.



In the fall of 1863, Grant, who was the hero of the hour because of Vicksburg and Chattanooga, was boosted for the presidency by a number of papers, particularly the New York Herald. Lincoln, who had never seen Grant, was much puzzled and did not know what might be Grant's desire in the matter. It was Grant, himself, who put the president's mind at ease by stating in no uncertain terms that he had no desire for the presidency and expressed nothing but the utmost devotion to Lincoln.<sup>1</sup>

In October 1863, Greeley wrote Chase suggesting that he run as the Union candidate. To this request, Chase penned a reply, "I greatly value your approval and that confidence which induces you to express a preference for me as the next Union candidate for the chief magistracy. Should circumstances justify your final action in accordance with this preference, and should it be my lot (which does not now seem probable enough to affect me much) to be called to that responsible position, I shall take to it whatever capacity God has given me, and just the same spirit and industry which I have brought to other public duties. Should the choice fall on another, I shall retire to private life equally content to devote myself to its

1. Tarbell, Life of Lincoln, Vol. III, p. 172, A letter from Grant to Mr. J. Russell Jones of Chicago, a friend of Grant, which was revealed to Lincoln.

less conspicuous, but not less healthful duties."<sup>1</sup>

Not the least of Chase's supporters were the members of the Cooke family. The two brothers, Jay and Henry Cooke, had been acquainted with Chase for some time, even before, as Chase expressed in a letter to the president, he was able to bestow favors.

As governor of Ohio, Chase became acquainted with Henry Cooke and spoke on the same platform with the father of the two boys. Chase had never met Jay, however, until after he became Secretary of the Treasury.<sup>2</sup> Of the two brothers, Henry Cooke was the politician, while Jay never cared to play politics except as it dealt directly with financial problems. As a consequence, Jay used his brother Henry as a go-between between the bank and Washington. In business Henry was far inferior to his brother, and Jay often found it necessary to help him out of financial scrapes. Early in the Lincoln administration, March 25, 1861, Jay wrote this letter to his brother Henry:

Jay Cooke to Henry, March 25.

"What we wish to do with the Treasury is to have the Department allow us to make frequent transfers that are made from point to point instead of giving the business to Adams and Co. We can make those transfers and the Department when flush can give us thirty, sixty, ninety or one hundred twenty days at a time, as it is no

1. Schuckers, Life of Chase, p. 394.

2. Oberholtzer, T. B., Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War, p. 131.



loss to them, and the interest in the meantime would be clear profit and to be divided, there being no reason against it, provided honest men are entrusted with the business - - - - - I would advise Governor Chase not to try too much to save the pennies but to keep on the right side of those capitalists who are disposed to dabble in loans, etc. of the government, and if they do make sometimes a handsome margin it is no more than they are entitled to in such times as these."<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1861 Chase offered Jay the position of Treasurer of the Mint and Assistant Treasurer. Jay, however, politely declined, no doubt preferring to secure subscriptions for loans, rather than take a small salaried job.<sup>2</sup>

The election in Ohio in the fall of 1863 was of particular interest to both Lincoln and Chase, but for different reasons. For Lincoln it was important for the Republicans to win because he looked upon it as a judgment upon the way he had dealt with Vallandigham in 1862 and would be indicative of his own strength in that state. To Chase, it was important that the Republicans would win in order that his own men, including the candidate-governor, Brough, would be elected and would support him in 1864.

Chief among the Chase men in Ohio were Judge Joseph Geiger and M. D. Potter of the Cincinnati Commercial. These men lent him considerable aid during the early part of the presidential canvass. Governor Tod, who had been in

1. Oberholtzer, T. B., Jay Cooke, the Financier of the Civil War, Vol. I, p. 132.

2. *ibid*, Vol. I, p. 137.

office from 1861 to 1863 was not chosen as a candidate, being defeated by Brough, who was backed by Geiger and the Chase men. John Brough had been president of Bellefontaine Railroad Company, and offered to run as governor only if he could retain the salary that he received as president of that company.<sup>1</sup> It is little wonder that Tod had any sympathy for Chase because of the undermining tactics of Chase's associates, but during the campaign we find relations between the two had improved to the extent that both spoke from the same platform.

The Blair-Bates-Welles group in the cabinet were positive that Chase was making his opening bid for the presidency and told the president so. Montgomery Blair gained the president's ear often in those days.

In Pennsylvania, we also find Chase's influence. An agent of Governor Curtin, John Cavode, approached Chase on August 30, 1863 before the election with the proposition that if Chase would turn over the treasury patronage in Pennsylvania to the Curtin clique that they would support him for the presidency.<sup>2</sup> To this proposition, Chase declined but it is said that treasury appointments elsewhere were made with the presidential support in mind.

1. D. V. Smith, Chase and Election of 1860, Ohio Archaeological and Historical Association, Vol. XXXIX, p. 784.

2. *ibid*, Vol. XXXIX, p. 786.

By the beginning of the year 1864, Chase, perhaps, reached the peak of his popularity. As the president's misfortunes increased, Chase's hopes increased. A number of influential people took up Chase's cause, Joshua Giddings, Cassius M. Clay, and Governor Bowman of West Virginia, who stated that without a doubt Chase could carry the state of West Virginia. On New Years' day the New York World stated that the year of 1863 was the "most mournfully memorable" year in the history of the country. The Massachusetts Springfield Republican, admonished the Lincolnites not to be too hasty in bringing forward their candidate. The Cincinnati Gazette, on January 20, boosted Oliver P. Morton as Lincoln's successor and through all this period Greeley plotted and planned with the radicals.<sup>1</sup>

In January of 1864, Flamen Ball of Cincinnati, the old law partner of Chase undertook to write a campaign biography for him. Iowa, with Judge Butler, Springer, and Senator Grimes seemed to be strong for Chase. Even in Lincoln's own state, Governor Yates was very cool towards Lincoln. But the way was still not easy, Dickinson told Chase that Lincoln was in his opinion, as far as Ohio was concerned, the people's choice and this caused Chase considerable concern. In a letter to J. C. Hall on January 18, Chase wrote of

1. D. V. Smith, Chase and the Election of 1860, Ohio Archaeological and Historical Association, Vol. XXXIX, p. 786.

the many voluntary organizations that were supporting him but stated he, "Of course, under these circumstances, I desire the support of Ohio. If, however, it shall be the pleasure of the majority of our friends in Ohio to indicate the preference for another, I shall accept their action."<sup>1</sup>

On February 2, he sent a letter to Flamen Ball, "I cannot help being gratified by the preferences expressed for me in some quarters, for those who express it are generally men of great weight, high character and independent judgment."<sup>2</sup>

Chase, believing that his political prospects were steadily improving became more and more in the open in his criticisms of the president. This can be noted in his letter to Joshua Leavitt.

To Joshua Leavitt:

My Dear Friend:

Had there been any administration in the true sense of the word, a president conferring with his cabinet and taking their united judgments, and with their aid enforcing activity economy and energy, in all departments of public service, we could have spoken boldly and defied the world. But our condition here has always been different. I preside over the funnel, everybody else and especially the Secretary of War and Navy over the spigots, and keep them well open, too. Seward conducts foreign relations with very little let or help from anybody. There is no unity and no system except so far as it is departmental. There is progress but it is slow and involuntary, just what is coerced by the irresistible

1. Schuckers, Life of Chase, p. 497.

2. *ibid*, p. 498.

pressure of the vast force of the people. How under such circumstances can anybody announce a policy which can only be made respectable by union wisdom and courage.<sup>1</sup>

His chief criticisms were the lack of unity in administration and the unprecedented waste and extravagance.

To Flamen Ball, he again wrote on February 1, 1864, "At present, indications point to the renomination of Lincoln. His personal popularity is great and deserved. If to his kindness of spirit and good sense he joined strong will and energetic action, there would be little left to wish for in him. As it is, I think he will be likely to close his term with more honor than he will the second should he be reelected."<sup>2</sup>

At the last of January, Chase and Lincoln had a disagreement concerning patronage in the Custom House of New York. The Weed faction had controlled patronage here and were interested in maintaining that control. The appointment of Hiram Barney, to the post of collector, was particularly gratifying to Chase as Barney had been an acquaintance of his for twenty years. Barney was known, however, to have radical proclivities and was a source of embarrassment to the president. Barney tried to keep appointments on a basis of service without ref-

1. Warden, R. B., Life and Public Services of S. P. Chase, p. 561-562.

2. *ibid*, p. 569.



erence to the interests of rival factions or presidential candidates. He was aware of the embarrassment he caused the president and because of his health, he had tendered his resignation. Both Chase and Lincoln persuaded him to stay in office, at least, for the present. In the latter part of the year he had been asked by the conservatives to declare himself for Lincoln and on refusing they had, during his absence, arrested his private secretary, Albert Palmer. The charges for his arrest were not stated but it was common belief that they thought they could get him to incriminate his chief.<sup>1</sup>

Following this episode a resolution was passed in the House of Representatives, demanding an investigation by the Committee on Reconstruction. On the appointment of this committee, Mr. Barney's resignation was accepted by Lincoln. The investigation was continued but with little results and with no damage to Chase's conduct in connection with that office.<sup>2</sup>

While this was going on unusual events were taking place in Congress which were particularly pertinent to the approaching convention.

On February 20, the Constitutional Union, a small Washington paper published a circular marked "strictly private," dated February 1, 1864, which bore the signature

1. Schuckers, Life of Chase, p. 478.

2. *ibid*, p. 579.

of S. C. Pomeroy, senator from Kansas. The conclusions of this circular were as follows:

1. That even were the reelection of Mr. Lincoln desirable, it is practically impossible against the union of influences which will oppose him.
2. That should he be reelected, his manifest tendency toward compromise and temporary expedients of policy will become stronger during a second term than it has been in the first, and cause of human liberty and the dignity of the nation suffer proportionately, while the wary may continue to languish during his whole administration, till the public debt shall become a burden too great to be borne.
3. That the patronage of the Government through the necessities of the war has been so rapidly increased, and to such an enormous extent, and so loosely placed, as to render the application of the one-term principle absolutely essential to the certain safety of our Republican institutions.
4. That we find united in Hon. Salmon P. Chase more of the qualities needed in a president, during the next four years, than are combined in any other available candidate. His record is clear and unimpeachable, showing him to be a statesman of rare ability, and an administrator, of the highest order, while his private character furnishes the surest available guarantee of economy and purity in the management of public affairs.
5. That the discussion of the presidential question already commenced by the friends of Chase, has developed popularity and strength unexpected even to his warmest advisors.<sup>1</sup>

It goes on to say that a National Executive committee had been appointed with Pomeroy as President and J. M. Winchel as secretary.

The Pomeroy Circular was a document which we might truthfully say did Chase more harm than good and was an

1. Schuckers, Life of Chase, p. 499.

attempt of earnest but misguided friends. Just how Pomeroy and Winchel came to be such good friends of Chase can be explained in this way.

In 1862 Congress passed a bill known as the Pacific Railroad act which contemplated construction of one main continental line from the Platte Valley at the one-hundredth meridian to the Pacific Coast with branches to Omaha and Kansas City. The franchises and subsidies to the main roads were to be shared also by the local roads already in operation. The Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad by taking over the charter of the Platte Railroad, which extended from St. Joseph to Atchison, was in the Kansas Branch and therefore eligible to receive benefits of the law. At least, Pomeroy thought so. Pomeroy was financially interested in the railroad and asked Chase to make a judgment for his claim. This Chase did and as a result of a favorable negotiation, Pomeroy became a Chase man.<sup>1</sup>

Without a doubt, Lincoln was aware of the machinations of the Chase men and also the derogatory remarks of Chase, and no doubt he was much irritated by them. His two secretaries, Nicholay and Hay, kept him well-posted upon such things. It is quite possible that Lincoln knew of the Pomeroy circular before Chase did. In a letter from Chase to the president on February 22, Chase did not deny that he

1. D. V. Smith, Chase and the Election of 1860, Ohio Archaeological and Historical Association, Vol. XXXIX, p. 786, 1930.

had had interviews with several men concerning his candidacy, but at the same time he stated he was unaware of such a proposal as the Pomeroy circular and closed with the offer of resigning if the president had lost his confidence in him.<sup>1</sup> Still, Lincoln had a multitude of reasons for keeping Chase in office. First of all, he believed that while Chase was still Secretary of the Treasury any attempts of his to become president would discredit him, and, secondly, Chase had on all other points conducted his office with ability and efficiency and he did not feel like dismissing him for purely political reasons.

On February 23, Indiana held her state Union convention. This convention, it seems to me, was the turning point in Chase's popularity. Before the convention a treasury official came to Indianapolis and succeeded in convincing a number of Germans and other Republicans that Lincoln had not prosecuted the war with sufficient vigor.<sup>2</sup> He asked Morton for a bearing of the committee on resolutions and the privilege of presenting Chase's name at the convention. To this Morton consented, stating, however, that it was his wishes to keep the State and National tickets separate. A

1. Schuckers, Life of S. P. Chase, p. 500. Letters from Chase to the president on Feb. 22 in regard to the Pomeroy Circular.
2. D. V. Smith, Chase and Election of 1860, Ohio Archaeological and Historical Association, Vol. XXXIX, 1930, p. 792.



year before, the story goes, Morton and Chase were very close in their political talks.<sup>1</sup> It is even said that at one time Chase had offered Morton the position of Secretary of State were he elected president in 1864.<sup>2</sup> At this time it was felt that Morton was a Lincoln man. In the first day of the nomination, before Morton or the Chase men had opportunity to prevent it, Colonel Allen introduced a resolution endorsing the administration of Lincoln and Morton.<sup>3</sup> Immediately the cheering became so great that it was some time before a vote could be taken and during that time Morton became an avowed Lincoln man.

On the very next day a legislative caucus in Ohio endorsed Lincoln without even mentioning Chase. J. C. Hall, in a letter to Chase, explained that the caucus did not announce its intentions and give the Chase men an opportunity to forestall its action.<sup>4</sup> At this time Lincoln sent a reply to Chase, stating that he would accept the position in his cabinet and not change its personnel.<sup>5</sup> Who knows

1. D. V. Smith, Chase and Election of 1860, Ohio Archaeological and Historical Association, Vol. XXXIX, 1930, p. 793.

2. *ibid*, p. 793.

3. Wm. D. Foulke, Life of C. P. Morton, p. 292.

4. Cincinnati Commercial, February 27, 1864, Ohio Archaeological and Historical Association, Vol. XXXIX, 1930, p. 795.

5. Schuckers, Life of Chase, p. 501, Letter to Chase, Feb. 29, 1864.



what might have been Lincoln's answer had the affairs in Indiana and Ohio turned out differently. Many of Chase's friends, including J. A. Garfield and William Orton of New York, advised his withdrawal. Greeley stated that an unsolicited candidacy should not be refused and J. W. Winchel stated that the dangers in withdrawal were great and might be considered final by many and his financial support would cease.

On March 4, Chase decided definitely to withdraw and wrote letters to Orton and Cooke, announcing his intentions. On March 5, he penned a letter to J. C. Hall, stating that according to his previous agreement that if Ohio should turn him down, then he would retire from the candidacy. Since they had done this, he now proposed to give up the attempt. He also asked that the dispatch be published in the Ohio papers. This was done on March 11.<sup>1</sup> Many in Washington knew of the Hall letter before it was published and few took it seriously. In the comments of the leading papers, we find Greeley voicing the hope that Chase would be president in 1868. Raymond of the New York Times, who was Lincoln's political manager for the first time in his life spoke kindly of Chase. Bennet, of the New York Herald, an independent paper, wrote, "Salmon is a queer fish, very shy and very wary, often appearing to avoid the bait just before gulping it down."<sup>2</sup>

1. Schuckers, Life of Chase, p. 502.

2. D. V. Smith, Chase and the Election of 1860, Ohio Archaeo-

In a letter to Dennison we find expression of Chase's disappointment and pique. He stated that the action of the Ohio legislature alone did not cause his withdrawal, but the real reason was that he saw the civil and military power of the country was being used to elect Lincoln at the expense of the Treasury Department.

In November of 1863, General Blair had been undecided whether to stay with the army or go back to Congress. When Montgomery Blair sought Lincoln's advice on the matter, Lincoln suggested that he resign his commission and enter Congress in time to make a bid for the speaker's chair.<sup>1</sup> Colfax, who was the other speaker, was a radical and a Chase supporter and Lincoln desired to have him ousted. Blair did come to Congress, but did not in time to capture the speaker's chair, not getting to Washington until the second week in January.

In the latter of March, Pomeroy got up and defended the action of the National Executive Committee.<sup>2</sup> This immediately illicited a response from Senator Wilkinson who made a long speech, closing with the remarks, "Sir, I do not wish to assail the honorable Secretary of the Treasury because I believe he has performed his duty as ably as any other officer in the government. I do not believe there

1. Wm. Ernest Smith, F. P. Blair Family in Politics, p. 250

2. Congressional Globe Session II, p. 1025.

is any officer in the government or that the government ever had an officer who discharged his duties more faithfully or with greater ability than the Secretary of the Treasury but I submit whether it is in good taste for the friends of that officer, while he remains in the cabinet of Mr. Lincoln, to assail the chief of Mr. Chase in order that they may elevate him to power. This administration must stand or fall as a unit and if its friends must not assail the structure in order that they may profit by it.<sup>1</sup>

In a speech which followed this, Thomas Hendricks of Indiana implied that relations between Chase and the Cookes were not what they should have been. In this speech they were discussing the merits of a plan to give the Secretary of the Treasury the right to control the price of gold by giving him discretionary power in disposing of the government's supply, "I might refer to the fact," said Hendricks, "that a banking company has been made rich by its intimate relations with the Treasury Department. Perhaps a million dollars has been made by Jay Cooke and Co., by being made the special and exclusive agent of the Treasury Department in disposing of government bonds which might have been disposed by the ordinary machinery of the Treasury Department, and does not the secretary say after one firm has been thus enriched by its relations that the Secretary of the Treasury can have

1. Congressional Globe, Pt. II, Session II, p. 1027.

favorites; men he would desire to enrich."<sup>1</sup>

On April 23, F. Blair made his speech against the Chase clique. Stating in the beginning that he did not expect to remain in Congress long and that he would like to take a little of Congress's much needed time to clear an injustice which had been perpetrated upon himself. Referring to accusations of McClurg on June 3, 1863, he pointed out that the order had been forged and then photographed and sold to members of Congress. He implied that the Treasury Department might have done the work since they had equipment to do that sort of thing.<sup>2</sup> He pointed out that Chase had done nothing to prevent the work from being done or to stop the malicious reports after they were started. He then went on to point out that Chase had, for four years, taken the stand of letting the Southern states go. Some incriminating evidence was brought forth, showing that Stone, one of Chase's agents in Ohio, had obtained a subscription of \$5,000 from a banker in Piqua, Ohio, for the Chase war chest.<sup>3</sup>

In taking up the relations between Jay Cooke and Chase, he brought evidence to show that Jay Cooke had caused a fraudulent oversubscription of stock to be made from which Cooke reaped a considerable profit. In nine months Jay

1. Congressional Globe, Pt. II, Session II, p. 1027.

2. *ibid*, p. 1046-1047.

3. *ibid*, p. 1046.

Cooke and Company had earned about one and three quarter million dollars off the government.<sup>1</sup>

To what extent the accusations of General Blair were true, and whether or not Chase violated the trust of his office can be pointed out by these observations. Oberholtzer, the biographer of Jay Cooke, points out that Chase was frequent borrower of Cooke. We quote from one letter of Chase to Jay Cooke, dated February 1862:

My dear Cooke:

I congratulate you on the rise of your seventhirties and now I want to be borrower myself. Will you lend me \$200 in shape of your draft in New York. If so, please send it to me immediately. I want it on account of a store I am rebuilding on Katie's property in Cincinnati.

Your friend,  
S. P. Chase<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the year of 1862, Cooke invested Chase's small capital in such a way as would make him the most money. Chase was continually fearful lest people would misconstrue this relation between himself and Jay Cooke and was continually reminding him of the importance of keeping the public and private correspondence separate.<sup>3</sup>

In 1862 Henry Cooke piloted through Congress a bill authorizing the construction of the Washington and Georgetown Street Railroad Company. Chase at one time considered re-

1. Congressional Globe, Pt. II, Session II, p. 1047.

2. Oberholtzer, Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War, Vol. I, p. 210.

3. *ibid*, Vol. I, p. 211.



signing his office to become the president of this very successful enterprise.<sup>1</sup>

In Chase's political manoeuvres, the Cookes were an important factor, but their part of the campaign was concealed under such genuine patriotism and was so short-lived that they received no particular harm from it as bankers. Throughout Chase's campaign he kept the Cookes in strict confidence and was very anxious for their advice and assistance. Jay Cooke was known to have contributed at least \$20,000 to the Chase committee, headed by Pomeroy.<sup>2</sup> Of this amount, five thousand dollars was paid as an outright gift and two thousand dollars was paid to Daniel Wise of Walker and Wise and Co., publishers of an article, taken from a chapter of T. C. Trowbridge, the "Ferry Boy and the Financier," which was laudatory of Chase and appeared in the Atlantic Monthly. On top of this, the Chase men from time to time made loans at Cooke's Washington bank. These loans were never repaid, as none of the Chase men, including Senators Sprague and Pomeroy, would take on the responsibility of payment.<sup>3</sup>

After the Baltimore convention, Jay Cooke supported Lincoln's election and even contributed one thousand dol-

1. Oberholtzer, Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War, Vol. I, p. 211.

2. *ibid*, p. 364.

3. *ibid*, p. 365.

lars to the Pennsylvania State Republican Committee.<sup>1</sup> Many persons were critical of the financial relations between Chase and Jay Cooke. So much so, that in a letter from Jay Cooke to Chase, he stated that Fessenden would not deal with his firm because of the bad reputation he had gained while Chase was in office.<sup>2</sup>

In the latter part of September, Harper's Weekly published an editorial making the comment that when Chase inaugurated his system of finance Jay Cooke was a small time banker in Ohio. "Perfectly competent men," the writer continued, "could have been hired to do the job at one-tenth of Jay Cooke and Company's rates."<sup>3</sup>

While it is true that Oberholtzer does not in any way incriminate Cooke and while it is generally recognized that Jay Cooke did perform a great service as the government's agent in marketing its bonds, yet it in no way justified Chase's acceptance of support in his presidential canvass. To Jay Cooke as a banker it was merely a demonstration of what he called "practical politics" and he felt no guilt in the matter at all.

In discussing the Hall Letter, which Chase had written on March 5, Blair made this caustic remark,"---For that

1. Oberholtzer, Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War, Vol. I, p. 366.

2. *ibid*, p. 428.

3. *ibid*, p. 445.

reason his letter was written, he wanted to get down under the ground and work there in the dark as he is now doing and running the Pomeroy machine on public money as vigorously as ever. The work is now being done in Fremont's name and that poor creature is being made a catspaw to accomplish the objects of his intriguing rival. The Cleveland convention in Ohio composed of red Jacobins and revolutionary Germans was a plan the same as Calhoun used on John Tyler in 1844, to hold a side convention to force the Democrats to drop Mr. Van Buren. The Cleveland Convention is a whip convention which will say to the Union convention at Baltimore if you insist on the nomination of Lincoln, we will nominate Fremont against him as an independent candidate. Chase will be taken as a compromise candidate by delegates purchased by greenbacks and frightened by the Jacobin hobgoblin."1 Here Speaker Colfax' hammer stopped the speech and Blair was forced to take his seat.

Blair's speech on many points was unjust, being, no doubt, based upon false premises. This speech was a great aid to Lincoln and many thought it had Lincoln's endorsement. On this point, Lincoln denied any connection, and when it was pointed out that just recently Blair had regained his commission in the army, Lincoln stated that the commission was

1. Congressional Globe, I, Session II, 1047.

issued before he had known of the speech.<sup>1</sup>

Blair's mention of the Cleveland convention demands an explanation of what took place there. Welles, in his diary, spoke of it as a meeting of strange odds and ends of parties and factions and disappointed and aspiring individuals.<sup>2</sup> It was noteworthy because of the absence of any important persons and, again, as Welles put it, it was a heterogenous mixture of weak and wicked men.<sup>3</sup> In this convention, Fremont and Pendleton were nominated.

The National Union Convention met in Baltimore on June 7. The National Republican Committee, which had been called by Senator E. D. Morgan of New York, to a meeting in February had decided on this date. Chase had stated at the time that the date was too early and it certainly came at a low point in Lincoln's popularity. H. W. Davis had tried to prevent its meeting in Baltimore by hiring the hall and pocketing the key,<sup>4</sup> but it finally did get underway. Chase had called the convention a Lincoln-Blair convention in a letter to Governor Brough.<sup>5</sup> He also had stated that if

1. W. E. Smith, F. P. Blair Family in Politics, Vol. II, p. 259.

2. Welles, Gideon, Welles Diary, Vol. II, p. 41.

3. *ibid*, vol. II, p. 41.

4. Donald V. Smith, Chase and Election of 1860, Vol. XXXIX, 1930, p. 811.

5. Wm. Ernest Smith, F. P. Blair Family in Politics, Vol. I p. 256.

the convention nominated him he would decline. If anyone desired Chase's nomination, he did not present his name and Lincoln and Johnson were quickly nominated.

After the nomination of Lincoln, Chase became exceedingly irritable and quarrelsome. In June, John Cisco, Collector of New York Port, resigned his position. Chase proposed Mannsel B. Field. Senator Dixon was strongly opposed to Field and he was backed by Weed and Senator Morgan who desired a conservative. As a result of this quarrel, Chase sent a resignation which was worded in such a way that if Lincoln refused to accept it, it would be equivalent to agreeing that hereafter the Secretary could do as he liked in regard to the Treasury patronage. Mr. Chase to the President,

"....I have received your note, and have read it with great attention. I was not aware of the extent of the embarrassment to which you refer. In recommendations for office, I have sincerely sought to get the best men for the places to be filled without reference to any other classification than supporters and opponents of your administration. Of the latter I have recommended none; among the former I have desired to know no distinction except degrees of fitness.

"The withdrawal of Mr. Cisco's resignation, which I inclose, relieves the present difficulty; but I cannot help feeling that my position here is not altogether agreeable to you; and it is certainly too full of embarrassment and difficulty and painful responsibility, to allow in me the least desire to retain it."

"I respectfully resign the office of Secretary of the Treasury, which I have the honor to hold under your appointment...."<sup>1</sup>

1. Schuckers, Life of S. P. Chase, p. 508.



To Chase's surprise, Lincoln accepted the resignation, stating that though he still had confidence in Chase's ability, that conditions had arisen which caused embarrassment to both and he believed no other alternative was left.<sup>1</sup>

Welles wrote in his diary, "The retirement of Chase, so far as I hear opinions expressed, and they are fairly given, appears to give relief rather than otherwise, which surprises me. I had thought it might create a shock for a brief period, though I did not fear that it would be lasting. I look upon it as a blessing. The country could not go on a great while longer under his management, which has been one of expedients and of no fixed principle, or profound correct financial knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

Lincoln's first appointment was Governor Tod, who declined the position on July 1. No doubt this choice was one of political expediency. Tod had a considerable following in Ohio and could pull away many of the Chase followers. Soon after, he appointed Senator Fessenden, who was the logical successor, having been the chairman on the Committee of Finance, and a believer in the Chase policies.

Again we quote from Welles Diary, "But the president's course is a riddle. Tod is a hard money man. Fessenden has pressed through Congress the paper system of Chase.

1. Schuckers, Life of S. P. Chase, p. 508.

2. Welles, Gideon, Diary of Gideon Welles, p. 62-63.

One day Tod is selected, on his refusal, Fessenden is brought forward. This can in no other way be reconciled than in the president's want of knowledge on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

Letters in the early part of July, which were written by Chase to his friends, Messrs. Cisco, Plantz, Charles A. Hechscher, and Parsons, express genuine regret and disappointment upon leaving the office.<sup>2</sup> In his diary of June 30, written the day after his resignation and while Chase was still in the heat of his passion, he wrote of an interview with a Mr. Hopper, who told him that the president had told him that in case of a vacancy in the office of the Chief-Justice, Chase would be appointed to that position. "I said that it was quite possible, had any such expressions of good will reached me, I might, before the present difficulty arose, have gone to him and had a fresh understanding which could have prevented it."<sup>3</sup>

But while he was thus engaged, the Chase movement began anew. Greeley continued to write articles in his paper, the general expression of which was that to defeat the Democrats in November, the Republicans must have some candidate other than Lincoln.<sup>4</sup> About this time the Albany

1. Welles, Gideon, Welles Diary, p. 64.

2. Schuckers, Life of Chase, p. 509.

3. *ibid*, p. 510.

4. D. V. Smith, Chase and Election of 1860, Ohio Archaeological and Historical Association, Vol. XXXIX, p. 816.

statesman called on Lincoln to resign.<sup>1</sup>

The citizens of Butler County in Ohio called a meeting, invited Lincoln and Fremont to withdraw, and issued a call for a new convention to be held in Buffalo, September the 22. This movement was supported by the New York Herald and the Evening Post, but finally died away because of the lack of leadership.<sup>2</sup>

During the first part of August, the Wade-Davis bill on Reconstruction was presented to the president, who pocketed it for the remainder of the session. This measure, which was prematurely drawn in and designed, as Welles stated,<sup>3</sup> more to pull down the administration than to reconstruct the Union,<sup>3</sup> nevertheless, caused Lincoln to lose considerable popularity. Henry Winter Davis had printed a number of copies of the call to the Buffalo Convention and together with copies of the Wade-Davis Bill had them distributed throughout the country.

1. D. V. Smith, Chase and Election of 1860, Ohio Archaeological and Historical Association, Vol. XXXIX, p. 816.

2. Welles Diary, Vol. II, p. 95.

3. *ibid*, Vol. II, p. 95.

## CHAPTER IV

### DARK TIMES FOR THE PRESIDENT

From June 7, the time of the Baltimore convention, until after the capture of Atlanta by Sherman on September 2, the opposition to Lincoln was greatest. This was, without a doubt, attributed to the slow progress of the war. The unpopularity of the administration reached its height about the middle of August. On August 16 a call for a new convention was issued, to be held in Cincinnati on September 28. A number of prominent citizens in New York State and elsewhere subscribed to the movement. A meeting of the leaders was held at the home of Honorable George Opdyke. A letter from Horace Greeley concerning the meeting was sent to Opdyke and reads as follows:

"My dear sir:

I must go out of town tomorrow evening and cannot attend the meeting at your house. Allow me to say a word.

Mr. Lincoln is already beaten. He cannot be elected. And we must have another ticket to save us from utter overthrow. If we had such a ticket as could be had by naming Grant, Butler, or Sherman for president, and Farragut as vice-president, we could make a fight yet. And such a ticket we ought to have anyhow, with or without a convention."

Horace Greeley

1. New York Sun, Unwritten History, p. 13, June 30, 1889.

Chase was not able to attend the convention either, but his sentiments were expressed in a rather incomprehensive letter,

"My dear Mr. Opdyke:

It was impossible for me to go to New York without breaking engagements made before receiving your telegram. I sincerely hope that the deliberations of the gentlemen who will confer under your roof may be fruitful of benefit to our country, never more in need of wise counsel and fearless action by and among patriotic men. Mr. Noyes knows my views, perhaps as well as anybody and expects to be present at your meeting. But my views are, by no means, as clear as I could wish, and I should be very glad to have the advantage of the clearer and better knowledge of other and better-informed gentlemen.

Your friend,  
S. P. Chase<sup>1</sup>

At the convention it was decided to send calls to all important men in all states and a second meeting was to be held at the home of David Dudley Field on August 30, the day after the Democratic Convention in Chicago.<sup>2</sup>

A number of excerpts from letters of H. W. Davis, written during the interim furnished interesting opinions, "My letters from Maryland say Lincoln can do nothing there, even where the Union Party is most vigorous, and everybody is looking for a new candidate from somewhere, I have a letter from Wade, who is sanguine, but is of the opinion that after Chicago has spoken is the time to act, till then caution and preparation. If Lincoln trys an embassy to Richmond it

1. New York Sun, Unwritten History, June 30, 1889, p. 3.
2. D. V. Smith, Chase and Election of 1860, Ohio Archaeological and Historical Association, Vol. XXXIX, p. 821.



will disgust the country.

If the paper, (call for convention) goes well in New York it will carry the country. I think Yates will be on our side when we pronounce, so a personal friend of Yates thinks here. He has written to him. I asked Hickman to sound Cameron and Curtin in Pennsylvania. I think we have a pretty good start in New York and the New England States, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Ohio, and Michigan. If a break be made there, it compels Lincoln's surrender."<sup>1</sup>

The movement to supercede Lincoln was not approved by all. J. Callomer wrote that to "change fronts at this time might prove detrimental to the armies in the field and prove disastrous to the Union."<sup>2</sup> Many were critical of the fact that they should have delayed until September. Many of the leaders were unwilling to take up openly a crusade against the administration. Such a person was Roscoe Conkling. I quote from a letter written by him in reply to the call, "I can hardly comprehend, or even credit, on any supposition, how all you say can have taken place. But you seem to have proof enough to show the danger of doing anything in these times except minding one's own business. You may rely on the "call" never making its public appearance through me, but I want to say now, while it is yet in season, to prophecy that the whole thing will be out, not in one place, but

1. New York Sun, Unwritten History, June 30, 1889, p. 3.

2. *ibid*, p. 3.

all over, presently, and I don't know why it is not now."<sup>1</sup>

Welles wrote in his diary on August 25, "I hear little of Chase, though I doubt not that his aspirations are unextinguished. That he is disappointed because his retirement made such little impression and has been so readily acquiesced in, I have no doubt....Chase has a good deal of intellect, knows the path where duty points, and in his calmer moments resolves to pursue it. But with a mind of considerable resources, he has great weaknesses in craving aspirations which constantly impair his strength. His inordinate ambition intense selfishness for official distinction and power to do for the country, and considerable vanity....I have little doubt he will eventually support the reelection of the president."<sup>2</sup> Just how accurate was Welles' measure of Chase and what he would do is brought out in the next few weeks.

On August 23 the president presented a sealed paper to each of his cabinet members asking their endorsement without reading the contents.<sup>3</sup> After the election the president disclosed the contents of the papers which read as follows, "This morning as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this administration will not be reelected. Then it will be my duty to cooperate with the president-

1. New York Sun, Unwritten History, June 30, 1889, p. 3.

2. Welles, Gideon, Welles Diary, Vol. II, p. 120, Aug. 25, 1864.

3. Tarbell, Life of Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 193.

elect so as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his election on such ground that he cannot possibly save it afterward.<sup>1</sup>

The Democratic Convention met on August 29 and nominated McClellan and Pendleton. A number of radical Republicans participated in the convention, including H. W. Davis, Colonel Shaffer, Richard Smith of the Cincinnati Gazette, Amassa Walker, Ben Butler, Charles Sumner and Emil Pretorius, the German leader of St. Louis.<sup>2</sup> While this convention was going on, a number of Chase's friends met in Washington and resolved to not support Lincoln. This meeting did not have the endorsement of Chase.<sup>3</sup>

Early days of September were the darkest days of Lincoln's life. Those that knew him said that during these days he seemed bowed down with grief. He could not tell who his friends were. Many of them, such as Richard Lieber and John Sherman suggested that he withdraw.<sup>4</sup> By this time Lincoln realized that it was time to make some concessions to the radicals in order to gain their support.

1. Tarbell, Life of Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 194.

2. Smith, D. V., Chase and Election of 1860, Ohio Archaeological and Historical Association, Vol. XXXIX, p. 825.

3. *ibid*, p. 826.

4. *ibid*, p. 826.

Since the time of Frank Blair's denunciation of Chase on April 23, opposition to the Blairs had steadily increased. At that time, Chase and the radicals demanded the dismissal of M. Blair, but Lincoln had refused.<sup>1</sup> At the Baltimore convention, Missouri was represented both by the radical faction headed by Emil Pretorius and the Conservative Blair delegates. The convention seated the radical delegates and this was considered a Blair defeat. Soon after a number of congressmen petitioned Lincoln to dismiss Montgomery Blair, but again Lincoln refused.<sup>2</sup> Not all the Blair losses were political ones. In July, Jubal Early began his famous raid through Maryland and Pennsylvania, coming within ten miles of Washington. At Silver Springs, the Blair ancestral home, they stopped on July 11. Here they proceeded to burn Falkland, the home of Montgomery Blair, because he was in Lincoln's cabinet. The home of the elder Blair they spared through the intervention of J. C. Breckenridge, who accompanied the expedition and who stated that he spared it because of friendship that had existed between them.<sup>3</sup>

This catastrophe Mr. Blair laid to the incompetence of Stanton and Halleck whom he termed as patroons and cowards.<sup>4</sup>

1. Wm. E. Smith, F. P. Blair Family in Politics, Vol. II, p. 258.

2. *ibid*, p. 258.

3. *ibid*, p. 273.

4. *ibid*, p. 274.

Halleck and Stanton came back with bitter denunciation and demanded Blair's resignation, which, of course, was refused. In the meantime, the Blairs concocted a scheme which they thought would defeat McClellan and the radicals.<sup>1</sup> It seemed as though everyone else was helpless to do anything. A letter written by Leonard Swett to his wife on September 8 depicts the condition as then existed in the state of New York, "When I arrived in New York I found the most alarming depression possessing the minds of all Republicans, Greeley, Raymond, Weed, and all the small politicians without exception, utterly gave up in despair. Raymond not only gave up, but would do nothing. Nobody would do anything. There was not a man doing anything except mischief."<sup>2</sup>

The Blairs thought that they could persuade McClellan to refuse the nomination by offering him the position which was held at the present by Halleck. For this purpose, not unknown to the president, Montgomery Blair made a visit to McClellan in July, before the Democratic Convention. While he was gone, Lincoln, for some unaccountable reason, decided not to appoint McClellan.<sup>3</sup> McClellan himself, while denying any desire for the nomination, would not commit himself.<sup>4</sup> F. P. Blair, Sr., also took up the campaign for Lincoln,

1. Wm. E. Smith, F. P. Blair, p. 279.

2. Tarbell, Life of Lincoln, a letter from Leonard Swett to his wife, September 8, 1864.

3. W. E. Smith, F. P. Blair Family in Politics, p. 279.

4. *ibid*, p. 281.



travelling northward and contacting the editors of all major newspapers to get their support of Lincoln.<sup>1</sup>

Since this proved a failure, Lincoln entered into a bargain with a group of the Fremont radicals in which they said that they would cause Fremont to withdraw if Lincoln in turn would dismiss Montgomery Blair.<sup>2</sup> Chandler of Michigan was chief of the radical instigators of this plot. In September 22 the bargain was brought to a successful close. Fremont published a letter announcing his withdrawal and the next day Lincoln requested Montgomery Blair's resignation.<sup>3</sup> Many considered this a cheap political bargain of Lincoln and it seemed eminently unjust to Montgomery Blair. Rhodes thought this a stroke of a master politician, though not a dignified proceeding on the part of the president.<sup>4</sup> Soon after the Baltimore convention, Blair had offered his resignation to Lincoln at any time that Lincoln thought it would be most expedient to the union cause.<sup>5</sup> That Blair felt no unfriendliness to Lincoln is demonstrated in the fact that he made a number of speeches in Lincoln's behalf. One speech made at Coopers Union on September 28 was the most patriotic

1. W. E. Smith, F. P. Blair Family in Politics, Vol. II, p. 284.

2. *ibid*, p. 287.

3. *ibid*, p. 284.

4. *ibid*, p. 287.

5. *ibid*, p. 292.

and unselfish demonstration of loyalty in the whole campaign. Later he made several speeches in Missouri where opposition to Lincoln was greatest.

One more episode must be related before the election in November. On October 12, Chief Justice Taney died. There were a number of candidates for the place, the most prominent of whom were Chase, Montgomery Blair, Edward Bates, Justice Swayne, and William M. Evarts. Chase had many times reiterated his desire for the post. At one of the first cabinet meetings he had inadvertently announced that desire, but of all the candidates he least of all deserved any concessions from Lincoln because of his disloyalty in the preceding summer. Early in September young Robert Lincoln, who inherited some of the keen powers of discernment of his father, had stated that relations between Chase and his father were one of "armed neutrality" but by the middle of September relations between them had improved considerably.<sup>1</sup> Chase had given up his selfish ambition and no doubt felt the relief which comes by giving up a fruitless attempt. On September 15, Chase was received cordially by the president and there was perhaps less restraint in their conversations than at any other time of their acquaintance.<sup>2</sup>

On October 14, Chase received a letter of Sumner, "My dear Chase: I have written to the president without

1. Nicolay and Hay, Life of Lincoln, A History, Vol. 9, p. 85.

2. Schuckers, Life of S. P. Chase, p. 511.

delay and urged anew the considerations to which he yielded last spring, in favor of your nomination as chief-justice. Of course you will accept. Yes, accept, and complete our great reformation by purifying the constitution, and uphold those measures by which the republic will be saved. God bless you!

Ever yours,

Charles Sumner<sup>1</sup>

The Francis P. Blair, Sr., was not hesitant in presenting the qualifications his son and pointing out the services of the Blairs to Lincoln and his cause and then closing with this generous remark, "Although I have urged this matter with some earnestness, you will not infer that I set up any claim. You have done enough for the Blairs to entitle you to their gratitude and of their posterity."<sup>2</sup>

While Chase had no assurance of his appointment other than that of his friends, who pretended to know, no doubt the idea stimulated him to exert himself in Lincoln's behalf. As for Lincoln, although he did not send the nomination of Chase until December there is no doubt that, other than Chase's splendid qualifications, he was also removed a dangerous political rival.

1. Schuckers, Life of S. P. Chase, p. 511.

2. Smith, W. E., Blair Family in Politics, Vol. II, p. 299.

## CONCLUSION

The fact that Chase had been so long a presidential candidate and yet could never reach that office causes his name to be placed alongside those of Clay, Blaine, and Bryan. He was an active claimant of the presidency for four elections from 1856-1868 inclusive. That Chase could not become president was due to circumstances rather than availability or lack of qualifications. A favorite son from Ohio was "available" for two reasons (1) Ohio had a large electoral vote and (2) the sentiments of the people were similar to those of the other western states.

The defeat of Mr. Chase must be ascribed to other reasons. In 1856, the Republican Party was still a weak party and Chase, like Seward, was only luke-warm toward his candidacy, desiring to wait until the party gained strength. In 1860, he made a determined effort to gain the nomination, but a split Ohio delegation and circumstances caused Lincoln's nomination. Even in this convention, Chase showed characteristics which marked him as a good statesman but a poor politician. One of the outstanding things of note in the convention of 1860 as well as 1864 was his lack of organization. Had he followed the plan of Lincoln or Seward in reposing confidence and authority in some one

person whose nature was well suited for the duties of a political manager, he might have been a more dangerous rival. It is often better to assign someone else the job of advancing a candidate's political career than for him to do it himself. A political manager, during the haste of a convention must make promises, pledge delegates and etc., when opportunity permits. A clever political strategist can accomplish much. Chase was not fortunate in obtaining the services of such an individual.

One of Chase's characteristics which was both a source of strength and a weakness was the tendency to do everything himself, even work which rightfully belonged to subordinates. In this characteristic he can be compared to England's Lord Palmerston and our own Woodrow Wilson. It revealed the self-reliance of Chase, but at the same time, limited his field of action. Nevertheless, Chase's capacity for work was tremendous. It was never more apparent than during the time he held the office of Secretary of the Treasury. It was his habit to begin work as early as six in the morning and work often until late at night. Such incessant toil had its deterring effect upon a constitution which by nature was strong and vigorous. Chase's physical characteristics, like Lincoln's, made him conspicuous in a crowd, but the two men impressed spectators differently. Chase was six feet, two inches tall with a frame in proportion to his height; he was very proud of his strength, but seldom exercised his



body or took any special care of it. After he had a paralytic stroke in 1870 he was forced to exercise in order to restore his health, but he did this, not for the love of exercise, but to restore his body that he might do more work. Perhaps, no other person, with the possible exception of Stanton, performed such prodigious labors and without question their lives were considerable shortened by the pressure of their ministerial duties.

Chase had few personal friends, but a large number of followers. Listed among his close friends may be found those who were associated with him during his early law practice in Ohio. One of his great failings was that he was not a good judge of character and formed his associates among weak men. He gave his confidence freely to anyone who came flattering him and criticizing the president; and after giving this confidence it was almost impossible to make him believe the man who talked so judiciously could be a knave.<sup>1</sup> Warden in his biography says, "He was indeed sought less by strong men and by good men than by weak and by bad men."<sup>2</sup> The placing of men of bad character in positions of trust often got him into great difficulties because his persistence in the good faith of bad men led others to believe in his complicity with their machinations. Again quoting from

1. Nicolay and Hay, Life of Lincoln, Vol. IX, p. 85.

2. Warden, Life of Salmon P. Chase, p. 530.

Schuckers we find this comment: "Chase had a great idealizing faculty. He could idealize the most prosaic character. He could neglect his truest friends to win doubtful friendship of weak men. Bad men as well as good men saw the weakness alluded to here. He was indeed sought less by strong men and by good men than by weak men and bad men."<sup>1</sup>

There have been quite a number of biographers of Chase who have consistently declared themselves satisfied in regard to his personal honesty and sincerity of purpose. It must be kept in mind that, with the exception of the biography written by Hart, the others are unnecessarily eulogistic. Schuckers was Chase's private secretary and no doubt wished to make out a good case for his chief. Judge Robert T. Warden was a good friend of Chase's and incidentally was Chase's chosen biographer. J. C. Trowbridge wrote the book titled "The Ferry Boy and the Financier" which was light reading for adolescent minds. It was an example of hero worship. This book was relied on quite heavily by the Chase men during the campaign of 1864. The opinions of Chase's character which are expressed in this book cannot consequently be depended upon. Rather we must form our opinions from many facts that have been disclosed since the time of the writers.

One illustration has been brought out to prove his

1. Schuckers, Life of Chase, p. 530.

personal honesty and integrity. While he was Secretary, Jay Cooke as his financial agent purchased three hundred shares of stock in the Philadelphia and Erie Railroad Corporation. This stock rose in value and Cooke sold the stock and sent Chase a check for \$4200.00 as profit on the transaction. In reply, on receipt of this check, Chase made the following statement, "-----When Congress, at the last session, saw fit to clothe me with very large powers over currency and financial movements, I determined to avoid every act which could occasion any suspicion that I would use the powers conferred on me to affect markets, unnecessarily or at all, with reference to private advantage of anybody. To carry out this determination faithfully, I must decline to receive any advantage from purchases or sales made from the rise or fall of market prices."<sup>1</sup> According to Schuckers, Chase came out of the Treasurer's office poorer than when he went in and "though he might have made millions, no doubtful penny ever came into his possession."<sup>2</sup> While not denying the truth of Schucker's statements or detracting from their value in estimating his personal honesty, yet we might venture to say that these statements, if true, did not make him a desirable person to have in office. Mere personal honesty was not the only quality desirable in a cabinet officer but loyalty and

1. Schuckers, Life of S. P. Chase, p. 390.

2. *ibid*, p. 610.

confidence were also important and Chase was sadly deficient in these qualities. The quotation above, if taken by itself, might go to show that the relations between Jay Cooke and Chase were conducted on the strictest sense of propriety, but as we have shown in Chapter III, the relations between Chase and Cooke were something more than those of an officer of the government and the government's banker.

The quarrels which rose between Chase and the president over appointments were largely a result of the fact that many of the president's appointments were made for political expediency; to satisfy his associates and those who kept the war going. Chase tried to keep appointments upon a strict mathematical basis of representation and upon a basis of efficiency and character. What he failed to see was that his own judgment in regard to the efficiency and good character of the men he appointed could be at fault. When he got into disagreement with Lincoln over appointments as in the case of Hiram Barney, Victor Smith and John Cisco, Chase as Nicolay and Hay put it, "immediately put on his full armor of noble sentiments and phrases, appealed to Heaven for rectitude of his intentions, and threatened to resign his commission if thwarted in his purpose."<sup>1</sup> This was, in part, hypocrisy, because when he was unopposed in his recommendations he made appointments on the ground of political expediency as did

1. Nicolay and Hay, Life of Lincoln, A History, Vol. IX, p. 85.

everyone else. For example, we take the case of Rheinhold Solger, whom he appointed as Assistant Register of the Treasury on the ground that the "German supporters of the administration had no considerable appointment in the department."<sup>1</sup>

Had Chase been successful in gaining the nomination in 1864 instead of Lincoln, there is reason to believe that he would have made a good president. In some matters of judgment and in his ability to gauge public opinion he was inferior to Lincoln, but as an executive he no doubt had qualities of force and decision which Lincoln lacked. The elevation to the presidency has two different effects upon men. Some have proved utterly incapable of handling its heavy duties while in a second class we find that all the hidden powers and latent abilities of an individual are brought out. In my own judgment Chase would have belonged to the second class. He might never have become a popular president, but he most certainly would have conducted the office with dignity and efficiency, though not as capably or with as much tact and skill as did Abraham Lincoln.

The fact that Chase desired the presidency was only natural for any man who felt that he had the qualifications and the experience for such a position. Chase conducted the office of Chief Justice through two stormy sessions. One was the attempted impeachment of Johnson and the second,

1. Nicolay and Hay, Life of Lincoln, A History, Vol. IX, p. 84.



declaring the Legal Tender laws which he had promoted as Secretary of Treasury, unconstitutional. While his conduct was not one of particular brilliance, still he maintained considerable dignity and acted as a curb on the extreme radicals.

As to Chase's actions prior to the election of 1864, he perhaps did no worse than most men would have done under similiar circumstances. Yet one cannot help but compare his actions unfavorably with those of the other cabinet members such as Seward, Bates and Cameron who were also candidates in 1860, and the unselfish devotion of Montgomery Blair to Lincoln's cause. These men, while at times critical of the president, still did not plot his overthrow. In 1862, during the cabinet crisis, when Seward resigned, Chase's actions, while inadvertently benefiting the president, were intended to weaken his position and permit the cabinet to gain greater control in the administration. There is no doubt that he worked against him in the state elections of 1863 and 1864 and in lining up candidates who were sympathetic to his own cause, but his political manoeuvres at this time were perhaps but little different from Lincoln's in the events leading up to the convention of 1860. The chief difference being of course the different positions of the two men at the time they carried on their machinations. For a cabinet member to conduct himself as Chase did was an offense which cannot be easily forgotten or over-

looked.

In February 1864, Chase missed his golden opportunity, had he been successful in gaining the endorsement of the Indiana State convention on February 23 in all probability he could have gained the other western states. There was no doubt about Missouri which even held out for him in the Baltimore convention. Here again, we might conjecture that, had Chase a political manager who could have looked out for him and had done some advance work among the Indiana delegates, results might have been different. After Indiana endorsed Lincoln, followed closely by Chase's own state, Ohio, which endorsed Lincoln by a legislative caucus, Chase realized that his hopes were blasted. While he continued to be critical of the President he began to withdraw from active opposition.

As to Chase's guilt in the Pomeroy Circular episode, it perhaps can never be satisfactorily or completely ascertained. My own opinion is that he could not have helped but know that such a thing was being proposed, but his vanity prevented him from taking action to stop it. The Pomeroy circular really ruined what chances Chase had for the nomination because it permitted his enemies, particularly the Blairs, a point of attack. While Chase denied any connection with it to the President and others it did not prevent his opponents or the electorate at large from believing in his complicity.

Throughout the entire summer Chase kept the presidency on his mind although he had actively withdrawn on March 5 from the race for the presidency.<sup>1</sup>

As might be expected, Chase's political activities had their detrimental effect upon his conduct of the Treasury office. By nature he was capable and thorough, but no one could maintain the conduct toward his chief that Chase did to Lincoln and continue the work as it should be done.

During the summer, many people became dissatisfied and the legend concerning Chase's infallibility and the confidence which business men had in him was exploded. There is little doubt but that Chase had been well thought of by big business men. It was reported that many business men conducted their affairs in the early part of the War from instructions they received from the Treasury Department. In the winter of 1861 when it began to appear that McClellan's army was going to return to Washington and not carry on the war with vigor, business underwent a considerable slump. Chase then made several statements to the effect that the war was to be prosecuted with vigor, and, as a consequence, business improved. That Chase erred in his predictions was no fault of his.<sup>2</sup> In June we find this comment by Welles in his diary,

1. Schuckers, Life of S. P. Chase, Letter from Chase to J. C. Hall, March 5, 1864. p. 502.

2. Nicolay and Hay, Life of Lincoln, vol. 9, p. 97.

"I am daily more dissatisfied with the Treasury management. Everything is growing worse. Chase, though a man of mark, has not the sagacity, knowledge, taste or ability of a financier. His expedients will break down the government. There is no one to check him. The President has surrendered the finances to his management entirely. Other members of the cabinet are not consulted. Any dissent from, or doubts even, of his measures is considered as a declaration of hostility and an embarrassment of his administration."<sup>1</sup>

There is little wonder then that the president was willing to accept his resignation of June 29. Chase, according to diary and letters, was plainly hurt and disappointed, but it is much to his credit that he was able to overcome his dissatisfaction and work for the common good of the country which was bound up with the reelection of Lincoln.

For this service Chase was repaid amply by his appointment to the office of Chief Justice in December. The regrettable thing about Chase's life was that he spoiled what would have been a brilliant career by his selfish ambitions. Had he conducted himself in the manner that he should have, the period from June to December, when he was out of office and was rapidly losing power and prestige, need not have come.

In 1868, Chase had his final fling at the presidency. The movement was purely spontaneous and marks no discredit to him. Peculiarly enough, his candidacy was taken up more by the Democrats than the Republicans. In the early days of Reconstruction there was a great deal of shifting among the political parties and Chase was not the only man of fame who

1. Welles, Gideon, Welles Diary, Vol. II, p. 60.

was suggested as a candidate by both the Republican and Democratic parties. In the Democratic convention of 1868, a California delegate cast one-half of his vote for Chase. When this was announced in the convention it caused a demonstration that lasted ten minutes.<sup>1</sup> Had the Chase men been organized, they could, without a doubt, have stampeded the convention. When the news of the nomination of Seymour was telegraphed to Chase, the story goes that he was out in his yard playing croquet with a friend and when the news was brought to him he did not even interrupt his game!

Historians have been too willing to point out the ability of Chase as a financier while slighting the influence of his character and personality upon the administration. While puritanical and sincere in his habits and character yet Chase permitted a selfish ambition to destroy much of his usefulness to his country. As a financier it is true that the National Banking Act was largely of his own making, yet the success of it is due more to the patriotic efforts and skill of bankers such as Jay Cooke and Company. Without a doubt Lincoln was fearful of Chase's ambitions and thought that by putting him in the office of Chief Justice he was promoting a cure for a chronic ailment which was damaging the character of one man and affecting the interests of a whole nation.

1. Schuckers, Life of S. P. Chase, p. 56.



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